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ABSTRACT

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THE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR THE EFFECTIVE READING TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

Pronouncements emphasizing the importance of the teacher in any reading program are shown time and time again in the literature. Exactly what teacher characteristics make a difference and what relationships indeed exist between teacher performance and student reading achievement has been a continuing puzzlement to educational researchers. Research areas and expert opinion which deal with teacher attributes and teacher performance and the effect of these on students' performance has been reviewed. The existence of teacher behaviors aimed at individualizing instruction lent support to a study conducted by the author hypothesizing a positive relationship between teacher effort and student achievement in reading. Significant differences in student achievement in reading in relation to teacher effort in selected areas in the teaching of reading were found.

"THE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR THE EFFECTIVE READING TEACHER"

Recent major studies in developmental reading have reported no significant differences among a wide variety of current reading approaches (Bond and Dykstra, 1967). Such findings have caused researchers to hypothesize that the key variable in the learning situation is the teacher. Exactly what teacher characteristics make a difference and what relationships indeed exist between teacher performance and student reading achievement has been a continuing puzzlement to educational researchers.

To state that "it's the teacher who is the single most significant factor in determining whether children will be successful or not in learning to read" is a most popular pronouncement repeated by educators today. Ramsey (1962) in evaluating three grouping procedures for teaching reading concluded:

> The thing that the study probably illustrates most clearly is that the influence of the teacher is greater than that of a particular method, a certain variety of materials, or a specific plan of organization. Given a good teacher other factors in teaching reading tend to pale to insignificance.

Bond and Dykstra (1967) highlighted the teacher's importance in their final report of the extensive Cooperative Research Studies in Reading. The authors stated:

> Future research might well center on teacher and learning situation characteristics rather than method and materials. The tremendous range among classrooms within any method points out the importance of elements in the learning situation over and above the methods employed. To improve reading instruction it is necessary to train better teachers of reading than to expect a panacea in the form of materials.

These pronouncements emphasizing the importance of the teacher in any reading program are shown time and time again in the literature. Simply stated, to improve reading achievement in our schools, the educational profession must produce better teachers of reading. Artley (1969) concurs that the place to begin to improve the quality of teachers is in teacher education.

Although studies of teacher characteristics abound in the literature, very little is empirically demonstrated regarding desirable teacher characteristics, or more importantly, the influence of the teacher on student performance. The bulk of the literature relates to teacher characteristics, and there are a few studies that relate teacher classroom behavior to student achievement. A major weakness in studies of teacher characteristics is that in most of them student achievement has not been used as a criterion.

The great majority of research completed in the area of teacher characteristics has dealt with the identification and measurement of various attitudes and personality traits of teachers. Spaulding (1963) reported that teacher attributes of being "socially integrative" and "learner supportive" were linked with higher and more positive self-concepts for elementary school pupils.

A colossal investigation of teacher characteristics was published by Ryans (1960). The principal focus of this study was to identify personal and social behaviors of teachers who were rated high and low by means of a self-report inventory and direct observations by trained observers. Ryans noted three dimensions of teacher behavior in the classroom as follows: "x" - warm, understanding, friendly vs. aloof,

egocentric, restrictive; "y" - responsible, businesslike, systematic vs. evading, unplanned, slipshod; "z" - stimulating, imaginative, surgent vs. dull, routine. Ryans reported:

> There is a general tendency for high teachers to: be extremely generous in appraisals of the behavior and motives of other persons; possess strong interest in reading and literary affairs, be interested in music, painting, and the arts in general; participate in social groups; enjoy pupil relationships; prefer non-directive (permissive) classroom procedures; manifest superior verbal intelligence; and be superior with respect to emotional adjustment. On the other hand, low teachers tended generally to: be restrictive and critical in their appraisals of other persons; prefer activities which did not involve close personal contacts; express less favorable opinions of pupils; manifest less high verbal intelligence; show less satisfactory emotional adjustment; and represent older age groups.

In relation to the emotional maturity of good teachers, Combs (1965) cites other studies that tell us how good teachers view themselves. He stated:

1. Good teachers see themselves as identified with people rather than withdrawn, removed, apart from, or alienated from others.

2. Good teachers feel basically adequate rather than inadequate. They do not see themselves as generally unable to cope with problems.

3. Good teachers feel trustworthy rather than untrustworthy. They see themselves as reliable, dependable individuals with the potential for coping with events as they happen.

4. Good teachers see themselves as wanted rather than unwanted. They see themselves as likable and attractive (in a personal, not a physical sense) as opposed to feeling ignored and rejected.

5. Good teachers see themselves as worthy rather than unworthy. They see themselves as people of consequence, dignity, and integrity as opposed to feeling they matter little, can be overlooked and discounted.

In summation, the literature on personality characteristics of teachers support the notions that teachers by and large are good, decent individuals who tend not to be rigid in their classroom conduct but highly flexible depending on the situation. However, these same attributes might well be the characteristics of all normal and well-adjusted people whether they be priests or Las Vegas showgirls. Artley (1969) seems to concur with this analogy and regarding the dilemma stated:

> We know nothing of what this person does in a reading class nor do we know anything about the achievement of her pupils. In short, the studies tell us little that we can put into the context of reading or that gives us helpful clues in planning programs of teacher education.

Other researchers have attempted to explain teacher classroom behavior through the technique of interaction analysis. Flanders (1960) studied classroom teachers' verbal behavior traits and showed that successful teachers were characterized by a variety of interaction styles rather than strict adherence to one style. He also found that these successful teachers produced higher achievement scores in their classes.

Amidon and Giammatteo (1965) compared superior teachers' verbal behavior to that of average teachers. Superior teachers were found to differ substantially from the average teachers in that they were more accepting of student ideas, tended to encourage such ideas more, and made a greater effort to build on these ideas than the average teachers. No evidence concerning pupil achievement was reported.

Guthrie and his colleagues (1970) assessed school effectiveness for the Equal Educational Opportunity Survey. In the final analysis,

eleven school service variables were linked significantly to students' achievement scores. Teacher characteristics found to relate significantly were verbal ability, experience, and job satisfaction.

In a study by Hanushek (1968), student achievement was matched with resources, in particular with teachers with whom the students were in contact. Teachers' verbal ability and years of teaching experience were found to have significant relationships to student achievement.

To ascertain the influence of teacher verbal behavior upon the language skill development and attitudes of below-average achievers was the purpose of a study conducted by Samph (1974). The data supported his hypotheses that students taught by indirect teacher behaviors rather than direct teaching behaviors had significantly greater language skill development and more positive attitudes.

Hamachek (1969) cited Flanders' study and other studies dealing with classroom behavior of teachers and interaction styles and concluded good teachers are characterized by the following behaviors:

1. Willingness to be flexible, to be direct to indirect as the situation demands.
2. Ability to perceive the world from the student's point of view.
3. Ability to personalize their teaching.
4. Willingness to experiment, to try out new things.
5. Skill in asking questions (as opposed to seeing self as a kind of answering service).
6. Knowledge of subject matter and related areas.
7. Provision of well-established examination procedures.

8. Provision of definite study helps.

9. Reflection of an appreciative attitude (evidenced) by nods, comments, smiles).

10. Use of conversational manner in teaching--informal, easy style.

Rosenshine and Furst (1971) summarized approximately fifty studies relating teacher performance to student achievement. Differences exist among their findings and those previously mentioned, thus showing that little cohesiveness exists among studies of this nature. The authors reported that some of these investigations have produced consistent and significant results. The results were grouped according to eleven kinds of behavior significantly correlated with achievement scores. Of the eleven kinds of behaviors, five were strongly supported by the research, the others not so strongly. The first five variables were: clarity of teacher's presentation, variability of teacher's classroom activities, teacher enthusiasm, degree to which the teacher was task to achievement oriented or business-like, and student opportunity to learn criterion material. The six variables less strongly related to student achievement were: use of student ideas or teacher indirectness, use of criticism, use of structuring comments, use of multiple levels of discourse, probing, and perceived difficulty of the course. Rosenshine and Furst remarked:

> At first glance, the above list of the strongest findings may appear to represent mere education platitudes. Their value can be appreciated, however, only when they are compared to the behavioral characteristics, equally virtuous and "obvious," which have <u>not</u> shown significant or consistent relationships with achievement <u>to date</u>. These variables...are listed below, and the method by which they were assessed follows in parenthesis: nonverbal approval (counting), praise (counting), warmth (rating), ratio of all indirect behaviors to all direct

> teacher behaviors, or the I/D ratio (counting), flexibility (counting), questions of interchanges classified into two types (counting), teacher talk (counting), student talk (counting), student participation (rating), number of teacher-student interactions (counting), student absence, teacher absence, teacher time spent on class participation (rating), teacher experience, and teacher knowledge of subject area. (1971)

Philip Kraus (1973) directed a twenty year longitudinal study of more than one hundred and fifty New York City public school students. Kraus followed the students from their 1952 Kindergarten year into their adult years, providing one of a very few studies over a long time interval. Hoping to find the cause and effect relationships of education in city schools, he ended the project with many inconclusive results, but also with some definite findings: teachers do not rely heavily on IQ scores, which are too variable to be reliable; holding students back a grade resulted in a loss of two years in reading achievement rather than a gain; gifted children blossomed when offered a variety of programs, but where programs were narrow and limited, few children were identified as gifted; reading levels and behavioral problems that will influence a person as an adult are established by the end of the third grade; and the characteristics of the teachers were more important than their racial background with either white or black children. The final two findings have significance to the present study. Depressing as is the conclusion relating to the reading level at the end of third grade as a predictor of future success in school, it is corroborated by other studies. Bloom (1964) noted:

> The first period of elementary school (grades 1 to 3) is probably the most crucial period available to the public schools for the development of general learning patterns. We are inclined to believe that this is the most important growing period for academic achievement and that all subsequent learning in the

> school is affected and in large part determined by what the child has learned by the age of 9 or by the end of grade 3.

However, some researchers have noted the great importance of the intermediate grade years and contend that more effort in the teaching of reading during these years would result in higher achievement scores for intermediate grade children as well. Shores (1974) has stressed this point of view many times in his research and has stated, "nearly all studies concluding the extreme importance of early schooling to later success neglect the possibility that these findings could be explained just as readily by ineffective education beyond the early years as by effective instruction early."

The last conclusion of the Kraus study noting that the particular characteristics of the teachers rather than their color made the difference, is certainly interesting and encouraging, but oddly enough, those particular characteristics that made a difference were not identified.

Some writers have linked various teacher procedures and skills to higher pupil achievement. Arthur Gates' contributions to the field of reading have been of great significance. In fact, he certainly was "a man ahead of his time" with many so called "new ideas" in reading being proclaimed today that Gates himself uttered in the 1930's and 1940's. Much of his work has enormous relevance to this study. With most of the educational profession in the 1930's supporting the viewpoint that a mental age of 6.5 years was required to be successful in beginning reading, Gates disagreed with this widely held concept. In a study completed in 1936 of factors affecting reading readiness, Gates isolated the ten lowest achieving pupils from four first grade classes

and assigned them tutors. Three months later, all ten children were enjoying success in reading. Noting the success of these pupils, Gates wrote:

> The study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and adjusting to individual limitations and needs...rather than merely changing the time of beginning. It appears that readiness for reading is something to develop rather than merely to wait for.

More conclusive evidence was reported by Gates in an investigation completed in 1937 supporting the idea that success in reading greatly depends on the type and quality of instruction. Again investigating the necessary mental age required for success in beginning reading, Gates studied four groups of first grade children. Testing for the purposes of the study was completed one month before school ended. The first group was instructed by highly rated teachers who were equipped with a large supply of supplemental materials and a large supply of diagnostic materials. Findings showed that a mental age of 5.0 was satisfactory for success in beginning reading with 93 per cent of the pupils receiving a final reading grade equivalent of 1.95 or higher.

The second group of pupils were instructed by teachers who were judged to be more expert than the average teacher. These instructors also were equipped with a large supply of supplemental materials and diagnostic aids for classroom use. Results from this group revealed that a mental age of 5.5 was sufficient for beginning reading success as only three per cent of the students with a mental age of 5.5 or higher fell below the reading grade of 1.5 on a standardized test.

The third group of pupils were taught by excellent teachers with a good supply of supplemental materials. However, teachers in this group did not have access to the large amount of diagnostic materials and aids utilized by the first two groups of teachers. Findings revealed that for this group a mental age of 6.0 or higher was required for success in reading as only five per cent with this mental age fell below a reading grade of 1.5.

The fourth group of pupils were instructed by average teachers with less than average amount of materials and equipment. The students were instructed largely by group methods with little attempt at individualizing instruction. Findings indicated a mental age of somewhere between 6.5 and 7.0 was necessary for success in reading as 84 per cent of pupils with a mental age of 6.5 and 91 per cent of pupils with a mental age above 7.0 received a reading grade of 1.75.

In essence, Gates told us in 1937 that the mental age of students is certainly correlated highly with success in reading. However, equally important is the type of teaching, the effectiveness and expertise of the teacher, the availability and good use of materials, and the adherence to individual differences in a particular reading program. Besides showing that a mental age of 6.5 was not required for success in reading, Gates turned attention away from the child toward the type and quality of instruction. Commenting on the findings of this study, Gates wrote:

> The most significant finding is the fact that the correlations between mental age and reading achievement were highest in the classes in which the best instruction was done and the lowest in those in which the poorest instruction was provided. More specifically the magnitude of the correlation seems to vary directly

with the effectiveness of the provision for individual differences in the classroom.

Chall and Feldmann (1966) studied the connection between the level of prereading skills, the reading method used in the class, the teacher's implementation of that method and reading achievement at the end of first grade. The results of the research supported the assertion that teachers do make a significant difference on student achievement in reading. The investigators reported that the teacher characteristics that made a significant difference with achievement scores as the criterion measure were a thinking approach to learning, a sound-symbol approach in the teaching of reading, and the presentation of lessons of an appropriate level of difficulty.

Pescosolido (1962) observed the classroom behavior of 28 fourth grade teachers in reading to identify those procedures which has a significant relationship to growth in pupil reading achievement. He observed these teachers twice and through an evaluative instrument measured the teaching procedures emphasized in their instruction. A positive correlation of .74 was reported between a teacher's rating and gains in pupil achievement. Seven teaching procedures were reported to have a significant relationship to growth in reading: 1) the systematic and meaningful development in vocabulary, 2) the availability and utilization of a variety of materials, 3) the determination of pupil attitudes toward reading, 4) the encouragement for an independent reading program, 5) the practice of reading silently before orally, 6) the development of purposeful reading, and 7) the teacher preparation time needed for planning a reading lesson.

Wade (1960) designed an evaluative instrument to measure teacher skills used in reading instruction in grades two through five. Teacher

skills included knowledge of readability and the selection of books for children, placement of students in homogeneous groups, determination of reading growth after instruction, diagnosis of reading deficiencies, categorization of word recognition errors, and knowledge of the goals of workbook exercises. Wade administered the test to teachers in the schools, prospective elementary teachers who completed a sixteen week training period, and undergraduates. Findings showed that teachers out in the schools performed better than the training teachers who in turn significantly outscored the undergraduates. A more important finding showed that teachers in the schools who scored in the top quartile produced higher achievement scores in their classes than did teachers who scored at the bottom quartile.

Some authors have investigated the needs of elementary teachers in the area of reading. Turner (1967) studied several qualities of beginning teachers to determine which qualities or characteristics affected their performance in the teaching of reading. The teachers who had problems in the teaching of reading were found to lack organization, warmth, friendliness, a high level of imaginative behavior, and a favorable attitude toward democratic student practices.

In a study by Adams (1964) the instructional needs of elementary teachers were assessed. Results reported showed that for more effective reading instruction to take place teachers needed a better grasp of: 1) basic components of the reading program, 2) readiness and motivation, 3) individualization, 4) teaching procedures for reading skills, 5) materials and resources and 6) evaluation.

The belief that the effective reading teacher needs to have a better understanding of the nature of reading, different methods, and

a variety of materials has been mentioned several times. However, there is much evidence to show that teachers are not given much training in the teaching of reading. In one survey (1971) of 850 institutions, only 91 required more than one reading methods course for its prospective teachers. Since at many institutions, more than three semester hours were required in several subjects including religion, the report concluded that teachers are inadequately trained to teach reading. It was further noted that more hours in religion were justified for the poorly trained teacher in reading because he had better know how to pray.

Other studies hint that a student's achievement in reading is affected by teacher attitudes. Goldenberg (1969) investigated how teacher attitudes mainfested themselves to children of different reading groups. Contrary to the primary objective of reading groups to provide instruction for each child on a level commensurate with his abilities, results indicated that teachers act very much differently toward children in different reading groups. Most of the teachers in the study of first grade classrooms devoted more time to the teaching of reading to the more able groups than to the less able groups. Goldenberg noted the relationship between his findings and the hypothesis of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Lipton (1968) studied the relationship between the reading achievement scores recorded by disabled readers and the degree to which their respective teachers manifested social and cognitive rigidity. Significant differences were reported between cognitive rigidity patterns of teachers and reading achievement gains of disabled readers with the low cognitive rigidity group producing greater gains. In discussing his findings, Lipton stressed that the problems arise in the

teaching of retarded readers, because retarded readers often interfere with the teacher's attitudes and behavioral norms. In order to deal effectively with retarded readers, Lipton notes that educators must be amenable to change in their materials, methods, and attitudes.

Many experts in the field of reading have expressed opinions concerning the characteristics of the effective reading teacher. Powell (1969) sees the effective reading teacher possessing the skills, techniques, and knowledge of the reading process along with the proper attitude to go with the skills, techniques, and knowledge. He views the effective teacher of reading as a master diagnostician who possesses certain competencies in the area of teaching reading. First, the effective reading teacher knows the components of diagnostic teaching. Second, he knows how to assess each child's different reading levels. Third, he can assess and interpret the potential of each child in his classroom. Fourth, he has grasp of the organic nature of comprehension. Fifth, he understands the concept of readability and sixth, he has complete knowledge of phonics, structural analysis, and linguistics.

Powell feels teachers can work at different levels of effectiveness in their teaching. He notes that they "can function at a verbal level, a performance level, or an automatic level." At the verbal level, the teacher uses the educational jargon but does not know the meaning nor application of such terms. The performance level has within it two stages. At the lower level, the teacher has the knowledge but does not use it in the classroom. At the higher level, the teacher has the knowledge but makes only minimal use of the knowledge in the classroom. The automatic level of effectiveness is the level where the true

diagnostician is operating. Here the teacher blends all the skills, techniques, strategies, knowledge, and positive attitudes together.

Durkin's recent textbook (1972) dealing with reading in the nursery school and primary grades has for one of its aims the maximum utilization of individualized instruction. The importance of excellent instruction is stressed throughout the book. Based on many classroom visitations and classroom experiences, Durkin has expressed her views on characteristics of successful teachers of young children. Describing good teachers, Durkin listed and gave practical examples of the following characteristics:

1. Take into account the characteristics of young children.
2. Are sensitive to individual needs and problems.
3. Use common sense.
4. Have diagnostic ability.
5. Have ability in selecting appropriate instructional goals.
6. Are flexible.
7. Know the meaning of "Enough."
8. Are knowledgeable.

Worthy of note is the fact that Durkin's conception of effective teachers of young children began to develop not by observing teachers but by observing the classroom behavior of children. When she observed children who enjoyed their school work and were happy attending school, Durkin assumed that in turn these children must be in the hands of a competent teacher.

In discussing the effective reading teacher, Durkin stresses that good teaching involves teaching what is required for reading and

making effective use of materials. Good teachers view materials as something that might assist or not. However, in reality too many teachers are assistants to the materials. This is most readily seen in some teachers' utilization of the basal reader. "This workbook page must be completed, because that's what the manual said to do," is a common reason given for a particular assignment. Related to this point is the importance of selecting goals in relation to what the students need and not what the manual tells the teacher to do.

Under diagnostic ability, Durkin stresses the teacher's ability to listen and observe children to learn about their strengths and weaknesses. Kohl (1967) likewise feels that the teacher must be a skilled observer and know when to intervene or not. In his book, 36 Children, he takes a diagnostic approach to teaching when he writes:

> I have found one of the most valuable qualities a teacher can have is the ability to perceive and build upon the needs his pupils struggle to articulate through their every reaction...To the mastery of observation of children must be added the more difficult skill of observing his own effect upon the class.

Kohl developed these ideas further:

> I am convinced that the teacher must be an observer of the class as well as a member of it. He must look at the children, discover how they relate to each other and the room around them. There must be enough free time and activity for the teacher to discover the children's human preferences. Observing children at play and mischief is an invaluable source of knowledge about them--about leaders, and groups, fear, courage, warmth, isolation...observation can open the teacher to his pupils' changing needs, and can allow him to understand and utilize internal dynamic adjustments that the children make in relation to each other, rather than impose authority from without.
>
> Without learning to observe children, and thereby knowing something of the people one is living with, the teacher resorts to routine and structure for protection.

Most teacher educators are cognizant of their inability to videotape effective teachers in the public schools. Teachers often are reluctant to give away their trade secrets or are conscious of their ineffectiveness. Henry and Mortenson's study (1973) "What Makes a Good Elementary School Teacher" makes significant contributions toward finding out what makes a good teacher of reading. The primary purpose of the study was to observe different teaching styles and identify positive teaching characteristics.

A group of parents, teachers, and administrators twice viewed eight classroom teachers during the reading period on videotape. The teachers involved were three first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, two third grade teachers, and one fourth grade teacher. A crucial part of this study is that these eight teachers were the only volunteers in four schools. Knowing the difficulty of videotaping teachers in the first place and in this case where performance will be analyzed by a group of teachers, parents, and administrators, this investigator is of the opinion that either these eight teachers were highly egocentric and/or were in fact the outstanding teachers in these four schools--ones who possessed a healthy self-concept and were not afraid to put their teaching on display.

The tapes themselves indicate that these teachers were highly effective and thus the significance of the study. The panel of judges used no predetermined criteria to observe the teachers, but the open ended comments regarding the videotapes resulted in a listing of desirable characteristics. A general summary of desired characteristics include attention to individual needs, knowledge of the content, utilization of a variety of methods, continuous differentiation of

assignments, numerous activities to accomplish a variety of skills, encouragement of pupil interaction, and use of high-level, open-ended questions.

Although no definitive conclusions concerning the relationships of teacher performance and student achievement can be made, some teacher behaviors aimed at individualizing instruction can be identified through the studies previously mentioned that require a great deal of time and additional effort on the part of teachers. These characteristics are: flexibility and willingness to try out new things (Hamachek, 1969), variability of teacher's classroom activities (Rosenshine and Furst, 1971), correct utilization of supplemental materials and diagnostic materials in individualizing instruction (Gates, 1937), lessons geared to the ability level of students (Chall and Feldmann, 1966), and teacher preparation time needed for planning a reading lesson (Pescosolido, 1962). The existence of these teacher behaviors lent support to a recently completed study (Blair, 1975) by this investigator hypothesizing that a positive relationship existed between teacher effort in reading and student achievement.

This study proposed an optimistic variable, namely teacher effort, that could in part explain the variance in student reading achievement scores.

Hypotheses advanced are:

1. Teachers who exert a greater amount of effort on the job in reading produce higher reading achievement scores in their classes than do teachers who exert a lesser amount of effort.

2. Primary grade teachers who exert a greater amount of effort on the job in reading produce higher reading achievement scores

in their classes than primary grade teachers who exert a lesser amount of effort, and middle grade teachers who exert a greater amount of effort on the job in reading produce higher reading achievement scores in their classes than middle grade teachers who exert a lesser amount of effort.

3. The relationship between teacher effort in reading and student achievement in reading is not reflected identically at the primary grade levels and at the middle grade levels.

Five reading consultants in a suburban New England town rated their primary and middle grade teachers on the Teacher Effort Scale In Reading. The scales were designed to differentiate between those teachers who manifested a great deal of effort in their work from those who did not. The Teacher Effort Scale In Reading has four subscales entailing efforts to: secure and utilize supplementary materials, provide differentiated instruction, keep records of student progress, and arrange conferences dealing with individual student's progress.

The mean reading scores of 37 classes on the Stanford Achievement Test of High Effort and Low Effort teachers were analyzed by using a two-way analysis of covariance technique. All three hypotheses were supported by the data. The overall effects of the High Effort teachers versus the Low Effort teachers were not identically reflected at the primary and middle levels. The negative effects of Low Effort were more pronounced at the middle school levels than at the primary school levels.

The findings of this research not only supported the opinions of many reading experts but other investigative studies concerning the teacher variable in reading and student achievement in reading. For

this reason, the findings of the present research study should not be ignored, and the credibility of the assertion that teacher effort in reading is consistently associated with student achievement in reading was strengthened as a result of this study.

One frequently hears that we in the educational profession do not know what makes an effective teacher of reading. This may be an erroneous and cowardly assertion. In essence, the results of this present study confirm what Arthur Gates said almost forty years ago. Surely, research on the teacher variable in reading has been sparse compared to the multitude of attempts to identify general characteristics of successful teachers. This investigator is also aware that definitive research on the teacher variable in reading is scarcely underway. Chall, in her influential book entitled Learning to Read: The Great Debate (1966), presented a fine discussion of the weaknesses, problems, and limitations of research in reading.

However, while acknowledging that we teachers of reading have a long way to go, we must stand up and say that we do indeed know some characteristics of the effective reading teacher. No matter what the method or class organization, we do know that instruction geared to meet individual needs through a level of effort commitment to individualization will pay off in student achievement scores. Teachers of reading who take the time and expend the effort to teach diagnostically, to utilize a variety of materials to meet individual needs, to differentiate instruction according to the ability levels in their classes, to keep records on students' progress and to continually keep close contact with interested parties concerning an individual student's progress or

lack of progress in reading will have a positive effect on student achievement. In other words, one key to being this effective reading teacher is the requirement of a high degree of effort or commitment on the part of the teacher.

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